

REMARKS

Claims 1-2 were originally presented for examination in the present application. Claim 3 is newly added.

Claims 1 and 2 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by, or alternatively, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over United States Patent No. 4,510,201 to Takeuchi et al., hereinafter "Takeuchi."

Claim 1 has been re-written as a product claim, and recites a spread mat. The spread mat comprises a mat body containing stacked and looped resin filaments, and crushed particulate material attached to the front surface of the mat body through an adhesive agent. The crushed particulate material includes particles of from 15 to 80 meshes and has a density of from 50 to 150 g/m². The adhesive agent is a mixture of a polyvinyl chloride (PVC)-based paste resin, a polyester-based plasticizer, a stabilizer and a diluent.

Takeuchi discloses PVC resinous compositions containing cellular fillers, and molded products prepared by subjecting the compositions to heating at an increased pressure. The molded products may be combined with a core layer, such as a non-woven fabric. (Abstract) The composition of Takeuchi further comprises fillers, and optionally, plasticizers and diluents. (col. 5, l. 63-65)

Applicants respectfully submit that Takeuchi fails to disclose or suggest the spread mat of claim 1. Claim 1 recites a mat body, and crushed particulate material attached to a front surface of the mat body through an adhesive agent. The Office Action states that the PVC composition of Takeuchi reads on the claimed adhesive, and that the fillers of Takeuchi read on the claimed crushed particulate material. This interpretation is mistaken.

In claim 1, the particulate matter is attached to the front surface of the mat body with the adhesive agent. In Takeuchi, by contrast, the fillers are embedded within the

PVC composition. The fillers and any other components within the PVC composition of Takeuchi are first dry-blended, in powder form. (col. 3, l. 44-49) This is carried out at a temperature of 50 to 80 degrees Celsius, so that the powder composition is powder molded. (col. 4, l. 53-62) This powder molded composition can then be attached to a core layer. As can clearly be seen in Figs. 1 and 2 of Takeuchi, for example, the filler is disposed within and throughout the PVC composition layer 2, and is not disposed on any surface of core layer 1. In claim 1, however, the particulate matter is not embedded within the adhesive agent, as with the filler and PVC composition of Takeuchi. The particulate matter of claim 1 is attached to a front surface of the mat body through the adhesive agent. This is done to prevent users from slipping on the spread mat, even if it is wet.

In addition, as noted on pp. 2-3 of the Office Action, Takeuchi expressly states that breaking a filler into a paste compound can produce undesirable results. (col. 3, l. 29-39) Applicants respectfully submit that Takeuchi can not be used to defeat the patentability of claim 1, given that it expressly teaches away from the feature for which it is relied upon. The very goal of Takeuchi is to avoid this method of producing a paste compound with added filler. This is why the reference proposes the disclosed dry-blending method.

Furthermore, the Office Action has failed to address crushed particulate matter that has a density of 50 to 150 g/m², as recited in claim 1. The Office Action's comments concerning product-by-process claims are considered moot, upon entry of the present amendments.

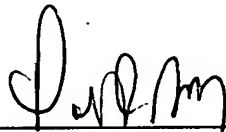
Therefore, claim 1 is patentable over Takeuchi under either 35 U.S.C. 102(b) or 103(a). Claim 2 depends from claim 1, and is also patentable over Takeuchi for at least the reasons provided above.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Such action is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: _____

4/6/08



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